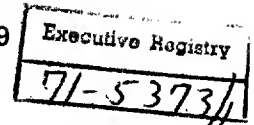


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28 October 1971



MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Authority to Declassify Information on U. S. Navy
Efforts to Break Japanese Codes in World War II

REFERENCE: Letter from Vice Admiral Rufus Taylor to
Mr. C. D. Blair, Jr., dated 9 October 1971

1. Vice Admiral Harlfinger telephoned General Cushman on 22 October in an attempt to determine what senior U. S. Government official has authority to permit declassification and publication of information on U. S. Navy efforts to break Japanese codes in World War II.

2. Admiral Harlfinger's call was a consequence of his conversation with Vice Admiral Rufus Taylor in response to Admiral Taylor's 9 October letter to Mr. C. D. Blair, Jr. of Miami, Florida (please see reference). Mr. Blair had written Admiral Taylor for information for a book which he proposes to write on U. S. Navy code breaking efforts during World War II. In his reply to Mr. Blair Admiral Taylor said that he did not have authority to comply with the request and suggested that Admiral Harlfinger and the Director of Central Intelligence were the authorities to make the necessary policy decision to declassify such previously sensitive information.

3. Admiral Harlfinger told General Cushman that he and Admiral Taylor believe that perhaps the time has come to permit publication of some information on the wartime work against Japanese naval codes. Admiral Harlfinger also believes that release of such information would be consistent with President Nixon's desire to release more classified information to the public. Admiral Harlfinger

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suggested that the information in question could be declassified and given to a responsible author for preparation of a book. Admiral Harlfinger's call to General Cushman was to determine who in the U. S. Government has the authority to declassify the information and permit its publication. General Cushman asked me to pass the question to Mr. Proctor for reply to Admiral Harlfinger.

4. I believe that the initiative in this case must rest with the Navy. Admiral Harlfinger should determine what the Navy wants to do and submit a precise proposal to the Secretary of Defense through USIB. The Director can then forward USIB's views to the Secretary of Defense, who, as the Government's executive agent for communications intelligence matters, should have the ultimate approval authority.



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October 9th, 1971

Mr. C. D. Blain, Jr.

Dear Mr. Blain,

This will acknowledge your letter of 6 October, 1971, asking for information concerning U. S. efforts to break Japanese codes in World War II.

Vice Admiral Hanfingen whose job includes concern for protection of sources and methods of intelligence collection, erred in judgement at least, by giving you my name as a source of information.

Lacking official approval, I will not help you in any way, shape or form to pursue this subject, on or off the record.

You mention long discussions with Joe Rochefort and Jasper Holmes but do not indicate what they said. Both of them have been very careful in the past about unauthorized disclosures so I find it difficult to believe they have changed now no matter what may be their views on the disclosure policy of the government. If Vice Admiral Grenfell and others made the revelations you mention I can only conclude that they have either violated instructions or they know something I don't about current disclosure policy regarding the effectiveness, or lack of it, of our cryptanalytic efforts, past or not.

I do not find compelling the argument that restrictions should be eased because Jack Holtwick is writing a book and Joe Rochefort has recorded a "massive non-classified oral history". Nor do I regard McCollum as either a knowledgeable source in this matter or a qualified judge of what should or should not be classified. In fact, I very much deplore the growing tendency of journalists, bleeding hearts, and garrulous old timers to decide for themselves what hitherto secret beans can be spilled safely.

Perhaps the time has come to ease restrictions. I'm not in a position to know. But there are people in a position to know and say, principal amongst whom is the Director of Central Intelligence who is charged by the "National Security Act Amendments of 1949" with "protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure".

Jasper Holmes must have discussed this point with you. He has not only urged officially the easing of restrictions, but has also submitted manuscripts on several occasions. He has been turned down each time after due and full consideration even though he was considered the best qualified man to do the job. To the best of my knowledge he has accepted these decisions gracefully and kept the faith.

I would, therefore, suggest that you seek official sanction of a compelling sort and, if you get it, collaborate with Jasper Holmes on the book you have in mind. In that case I think you will find that the people who can help you do the job right will be ready and willing to do so.

Sincerely,

Rufus L. Taylor
Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy (ret.)

CC: The Director of Central Intelligence
The Chief of Naval Operations
The Commander, Naval Intelligence Systems
Support Command
Commander Wilfred J. Holmes, USN (ret.)